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Freedom of the Press in U.S. Protests

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that activists in Cuba work within the existing government structures for women, namely the Ministry for Women, to bend the will of the government to combat GBV.

Many of the recommendations from REDAMU and CID members were predicated on Cuba becoming a democratic nation. Although a democratic Cuba would improve the human rights situation in the long-term, women in Cuba urgently need protection from GBV, especially in the context of the pandemic. Working within Cuba's existing government structures, as the President of IAHCR suggested, could offer a more productive short-term alternative.

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IN U.S. PROTESTS *by Abigail Rosenthal**

"There is no question in my mind that I was targeted, tackled, and arrested because I was reporting on the events around me, even though the First Amendment protects my right to do so."

Gustavo Martinez recounted his recent experience reporting on a protest in Asbury Park, New Jersey. Speaking before several NGOs and members of the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights (IACHR) at their October 7th session, Martinez detailed how law enforcement officers assaulted him despite the fact that he was clearly identified as a member of the press.¹ His story was one of many recent accounts of aggression against journalists covered in the session titled "Freedom of Expression and Journalism in United States Protests".

Along with these accounts, representatives from the Reporter's Committee for Freedom of the Press (RCFP) shared disturbing statistics regarding First Amendment violations. Since May 25th of this year, journalists reported over 850 press freedom incidents to the committee. These incidents range from journalists being falsely arrested to being blinded by rubber bullets. In comparison, just 152 such incidents were recorded in all of 2019. Disturbingly 85% of these recent aggressions were at the hands of law

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¹ Freedom of expression and journalism in United States protests, 177 Session Period Public Hearings, IACHR (October 7, 2020).

enforcement, the very individuals entrusted with the duty to uphold fundamental constitutional rights, such as the right to free speech and assembly. The RCFP and Fundamedios, a Latin American freedom of press NGO, called for an end to the arrests and use of excessive force against journalists. They called on the U.S. to conduct thorough investigations of each of the violations reported and to make the results of the investigations public. In addition, they suggested four broad areas for law enforcement reform— training, transparency, discipline, and proportionality.

The U.S. state representatives, Mr. Bradley Freden and Mr. Thomas Weatherall, affirmed the state's dedication to protecting free speech and generally condemned violations of this right. Freden assured the commissioners that the state will investigate and seek accountability when anyone, including law enforcement is accused of violating the law and that structural reforms were part of an "ongoing dialogue" in U.S. government. The representatives, however, declined to discuss the significant role that law enforcement has played in these violations or the specific policy reforms being considered.